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BRIEF SKETCH

OF THE

BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

BY

BREVET BRIG.-GEN. CHARLES HAMLIN





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BRIEF SKETCH
OF THE
BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

INTRODUCTION
TO
MAINE AT GETTYSBURG

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BY
BREVET BRIG.-GEN. CHARLES HAMLIN

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THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG.

BY BREVET BRIGADIER-GENERAL CHARLES HAMLIN,

LATE ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL,

SECOND DIVISION THIRD ARMY CORPS, ARMY OF POTOMAC.

A BRIEF sketch of this battle will enable the reader to understand the operations of both Union and Confederate troops given in detail, as they appear in the various accounts of the battle, hereafter in this volume. Such a sketch, indeed, is necessary for the general reader who desires a connected account, because the main purpose of this volume is to give a particular account of the various regiments and batteries of the State of Maine, rather than a single and connected view.

An invasion of the North was determined upon by the Confederate authorities soon after the battle of Chancellorsville in May, 1863. It seems evident now that the causes which led to this invasion were, that the term of many of the Union soldiers was expiring; the late defeat at Chancellorsville; and the hope and expectation to capture Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, which might end the war through a recognition of the Confederacy by foreign governments, followed by their intervention.

On the second of June, *Lee* began his movement north with the withdrawal of his army from Fredericksburg. On the eighth, *Ewell* and *Longstreet* arrived at Culpeper, to which place *Stuart* had already advanced his cavalry. General Hooker, on June 5th, ordered a reconnoissance below Fredericksburg, suspecting some important movement by General *Lee*. On the eighth, Pleasonton's cavalry and two brigades of infantry were ordered across the Rappahannock. On the morning of the ninth these forces crossed the river and attacked *Stuart's* cavalry at Brandy Station. Here occurred the first

successful fight by our cavalry when engaged in a large body. The First Maine Cavalry under Kilpatrick was engaged in this battle in desperate conflict and in which it bore itself with great credit. This struggle at Brandy Station ended in defeating and driving the Confederate cavalry from the field; but on the arrival of *Ewell's* infantry from Culpeper, Pleasonton withdrew his forces and recrossed the river. By the capture of *Stuart's* headquarters *Lee's* orders were found that showed his movement was north beyond the Union lines.

On the tenth, *Ewell's* corps advanced beyond the Blue Ridge, passed north through Chester Gap, and marched rapidly up the Shenandoah Valley. *Stuart's* cavalry was directed east of the Blue Ridge, to guard the passes, mask *Lee's* movements, and delay the advance of Hooker's army. On the fourteenth, *Ewell* attacked General Milroy at Winchester, who was hemmed in without definite information of the movement of *Lee's* army up the valley. Milroy attempted early in the morning of the fifteenth to steal his way out, and although discovered by the Confederates, succeeded in breaking through and retreated in haste, with heavy losses in men and material.

Hill and *Longstreet* hurried northward, the latter covering the mountain gaps in his movements. On the sixteenth, *Jenkins* with two thousand Confederate cavalry penetrated into Pennsylvania as far as Chambersburg.

June 13th, Hooker put the Union army in motion and kept his command between the enemy and Washington. Pleasonton's cavalry encountered that of *Stuart's* on the seventeenth at Aldie; and on the nineteenth at Middleburg and on the twenty-first at Upperville. On each of these fields the First Maine Regiment of Cavalry won new honors. After a severe engagement at Upperville the Confederate cavalry fell back through Ashby's Gap, and Pleasonton rejoined the infantry. *Lee* now seemed convinced that Hooker would not attack him south of the Potomac; and on the twenty-second he ordered *Ewell* to cross the river into Maryland, where he came to the support of *Jenkins*, who being reinforced advanced again to Chambersburg. Here *Rodes'* and *Johnson's* divisions joined him on the twenty-third. *Early's* division,

in the meantime, moved via Gettysburg to York with instructions to destroy the railroads and secure the bridge across the Susquehanna, after which he moved north and undertook with *Rodes* and *Johnson* to take possession of Harrisburg. On the twenty-third, *Lee* ordered *Hill* and *Longstreet* across the Potomac to unite at Hagerstown, and follow *Ewell's* corps up the Cumberland valley.

When Hooker learned that *Lee* was concentrating his forces north of the Potomac, he advanced the Union army on a line parallel with that of the enemy. On the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth, the Union army having crossed the Potomac, was massed between Harper's Ferry and Frederick City. On the twenty-sixth, *Gordon's* brigade of *Early's* division passed through the town of Gettysburg, and on the twenty-eighth *Early's* division reached York and Wrightsville. *Gordon's* brigade was prevented from crossing the Susquehanna by the destruction of the bridge at Wrightsville. On the twenty-eighth, Gen. George G. Meade was appointed to the command of the Union army, to succeed Hooker, who had asked, in the meantime, to be relieved. The immediate cause of Hooker's resignation arose from the refusal of Halleck, General-in-chief, to give Hooker the control of ten thousand men under French at Harper's Ferry. Meade at once ordered the Union forces northward, placed his left wing, consisting of the First, Third, and Eleventh corps, under Reynolds, directing him to Emmitsburg, and advanced his right wing to New Windsor. At this time the cavalry was disposed as follows: Buford on the left, Kilpatrick in front, and Gregg on the right. *Stuart* had separated himself from *Lee's* infantry in Virginia, and set off on a raid around the right of the Union army on the twenty-fourth. He crossed the Potomac on the twenty-seventh, in rear of Hooker, intending to rejoin *Lee* by marching through Maryland. On the thirtieth he encountered Kilpatrick's cavalry at Hanover, where a short and spirited struggle ensued, in which *Stuart* was forced to retreat northward, at the same time abandoning some of his trains containing captured property. On the next day, July 1st, he reached Carlisle, where he learned that *Ewell* had moved south towards

Gettysburg. He bombarded Carlisle with shell, burned the government barracks, and then moved south, via Mount Holly Gap, and did not arrive on the battlefield until the afternoon of July 2d, having been separated seven days from General *Lee*. The absence of *Stuart's* cavalry proved to be disadvantageous to General *Lee*, who did not know until the evening of the twenty-eighth, while at Chambersburg, that Hooker had crossed the Potomac into Maryland. *Lee* still believed that Hooker was in Virginia, held there in check by *Stuart*.

Lee at once began to concentrate his army, sent *Ewell* orders to retire from Carlisle and to recall his troops near Harrisburg. *Rodes'* and *Early's* divisions were ordered to join *Hill's* corps in the vicinity of Gettysburg, while *Johnson's* division with the artillery and trains approached the Chambersburg Pike via Shippensburg and Fayetteville. *Hill's* and *Ewell's* corps, on the thirtieth, advanced towards Gettysburg. *Pettigrew's* brigade, on the same day, was ordered with several wagons to Gettysburg to secure clothing and shoes.

POSITION OF THE UNION ARMY,
ON THE EVENING OF JUNE 30, 1863, TO THE SOUTH AND EAST,
AND DISTANT FROM GETTYSBURG.

First Corps, Doubleday (Second and Fifth Maine Batteries and Sixteenth Maine Regiment with this Corps), Marsh Creek, 5 1-2 miles south. Second Corps, Hancock (Nineteenth Maine Regiment with this Corps), Uniontown, 20 miles south. Third Corps, Sickles (Third, Fourth, and Seventeenth Maine Regiments with this Corps), Bridgeport, 12 miles south. Fifth Corps, Sykes (Twentieth Maine Regiment with this Corps), Union Mills, 16 miles southeast. Sixth Corps, Sedgwick (Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Maine Regiments with this Corps), Manchester, 34 miles southeast. Eleventh Corps, Howard, Emmitsburg, 10 miles south. Twelfth Corps, Slocum (Tenth Maine Battalion at Corps headquarters), Littlestown, 10 miles southeast. Buford's cavalry, two brigades, Gamble's and Devin's, at Gettysburg. Merritt's (Regular) Brigade, Mechanicsville, 18 miles south. Gregg's cavalry (First Maine Regiment with Gregg), Westminster, 34 miles southeast. Kilpatrick's cavalry, Hanover, 14 miles east.

Dow's Sixth Maine Battery was with the Fourth Brigade of the reserve artillery, at Taneytown, 12 miles south. Co. D, 2d U. S. Sharpshooters was with the Third Corps.

General Meade's orders for July 1st were, for the First and Eleventh corps to move to Gettysburg, the Third to Emmitsburg, the Second to Taneytown, the Fifth to Hanover, and the Twelfth to Two Taverns; the Sixth was left at Manchester.

POSITION OF THE CONFEDERATE ARMY,
ON THE EVENING OF JUNE 30, 1863, NORTH AND WEST, AND
DISTANT FROM GETTYSBURG.

First Corps, *Longstreet's*, at Chambersburg, 25 miles northwest. Second Corps, *Ewell's*: divisions, *Early's*, near Heidlersburg, 12 miles northeast; *Rodes'*, Heidlersburg, 10 miles northeast; *Johnson's*, vicinity of Fayetteville, 21 miles northwest. Third Corps, *Hill's*: divisions, *Anderson's*, Fayetteville, 18 miles northwest; *Pender's*, near Cashtown, 10 miles northwest; *Heth's*, at Cashtown, 8 miles northwest; *Pettigrew's* brigade, at Marsh Creek, 3 1-2 miles northwest; *Stuart's* cavalry, near Dover, 21 miles northeast.

General *Lee's* orders to *Hill* and *Longstreet*, for July 1st, were, for *Heth's* division with eight batteries to occupy Gettysburg, *Pender's* division to move promptly to *Heth's* support. *Longstreet* was to follow this movement with *McLaws'* and *Hood's* divisions.

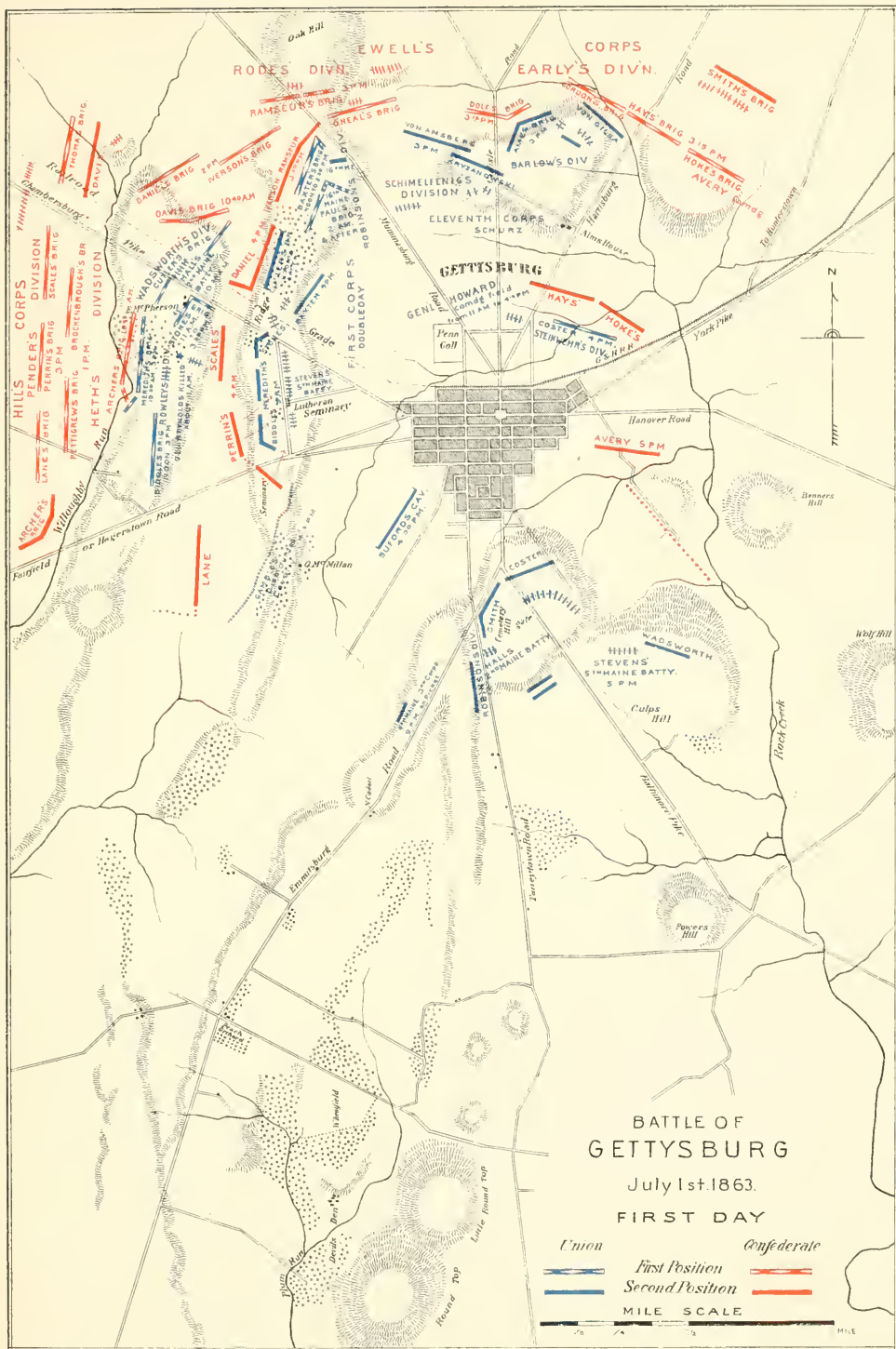
Buford's cavalry division, on the left of the Union army, was approaching Gettysburg June 30th, on the Emmitsburg Road, and encountered *Pettigrew's* brigade entering the town from the west. *Pettigrew* fell back towards Cashtown to a position on Marsh Run, where he notified *Heth*, to whose division he belonged, that Gettysburg was occupied by the Union forces. Buford's cavalry passed through the town of Gettysburg about half-past eleven o'clock in the forenoon. Halting west of Seminary ridge he went into camp, with Gamble's brigade south of the railroad to cover the approaches from Chambersburg and Hagerstown. Devin's brigade went to the north of the railroad, posting his videttes on all the roads north and northwest. Buford sent information to Reynolds of the presence of the enemy; and Reynolds, who was

instructed to occupy Gettysburg, advanced the First Corps from Emmitsburg to Marsh Creek, about five and one-half miles from Gettysburg. Meade moved his right wing forward to Manchester. On the night of the thirtieth, Buford held a conference with Reynolds at Marsh Creek, and returned, during the night, to his headquarters in Gettysburg with one of Reynolds' staff, who was to report to his chief early in the morning of the next day.

At this time, *Lee* appears to have been fearful that his communications might be interrupted, and he was troubled by the naked defenses of Richmond. *Lee*, therefore, determined to draw back and make a diversion east of the South Mountain range to engage Meade's attention. Although *Lee's* plan of invasion had been thwarted, he determined to defeat Meade's army. On the other hand, Meade, having selected the general line of Pipe Creek for his defense, had thrown his left wing, preceded by Buford's cavalry, forward to Gettysburg as a mask. Both generals aimed to secure Gettysburg for the reason that it controlled the roads towards the Potomac. Its occupation by the Union army proved to be of great importance when we consider the subsequent events.

FIRST DAY.

The first day's battle was fought on the west and north of Gettysburg. It began with Buford's cavalry holding back the enemy's infantry beyond and along Willoughby Run until the arrival of the First Corps, followed by the Eleventh Corps. A severe engagement, especially along the front of the First Corps, ensued, in which Reynolds lost his life; and the Union forces, under Howard, were driven from the field after *Ewell* came from the north. Hall's Second Maine Battery opened the infantry fight as soon as it arrived on the ground and was placed in position north of the Chambersburg Pike. The principal fighting by the Confederates along the front of the First Corps was by two divisions of *Hill's* corps, who did not succeed after several attacks until reinforced by *Ewell*. It was then that the Sixteenth Maine Regiment was ordered to



take position on the extreme right of the First Corps, at the Mummasburg Road, and to hold the enemy in check so that the remnant of the division might fall back; and thus, under imperative orders to stay there at all hazards, it was delivered to the enemy by relentless capture.

Stevens' Fifth Maine Battery, which occupied a position near the Lutheran Seminary, was sharply engaged during *Hill's* final assault, and aided by its rapid and severe fire in checking the enemy. The two corps of the Union army fell back through the town of Gettysburg, with heavy loss, but were not vigorously pursued by the enemy. The check given to the enemy's advance by the hard and desperate fighting of the First Corps led to results worth all the sacrifice; but to this day full credit has hardly been given to the great services rendered by that corps, familiar as we all are with the fearful losses inflicted upon it. The remnants of the two corps fell back upon Cemetery Hill, which lies to the south of the village of Gettysburg, and there awaited the arrival of the remainder of our army.

The chief features of the ground occupied by the Union army during the remainder of the battle, July 2d and 3d, may be described briefly as follows: South of Gettysburg there is a chain of hills and bluffs shaped like a fish-hook. At the east, which we will call the barb of the hook, is Culp's Hill; and turning to the west is Cemetery Hill, which we will call the shank, running north and south until it terminates near a slope in a rocky, wooded peak called Round Top, having Little Round Top as a spur. The credit of selecting this position has been equally claimed by both Hancock and Howard. At Hancock's suggestion Meade brought the army forward from Pipe Creek to secure it.

Lee, having arrived at Seminary Ridge with his troops near the close of the first day's battle, made an examination of the field and left *Ewell* to decide for himself how far he should follow up the attack upon the Union army at the east of the town at the close of the first day's battle. At this time *Ewell*, observing the strong position occupied by the Union forces upon Culp's Hill by the arrival of the Twelfth Corps under

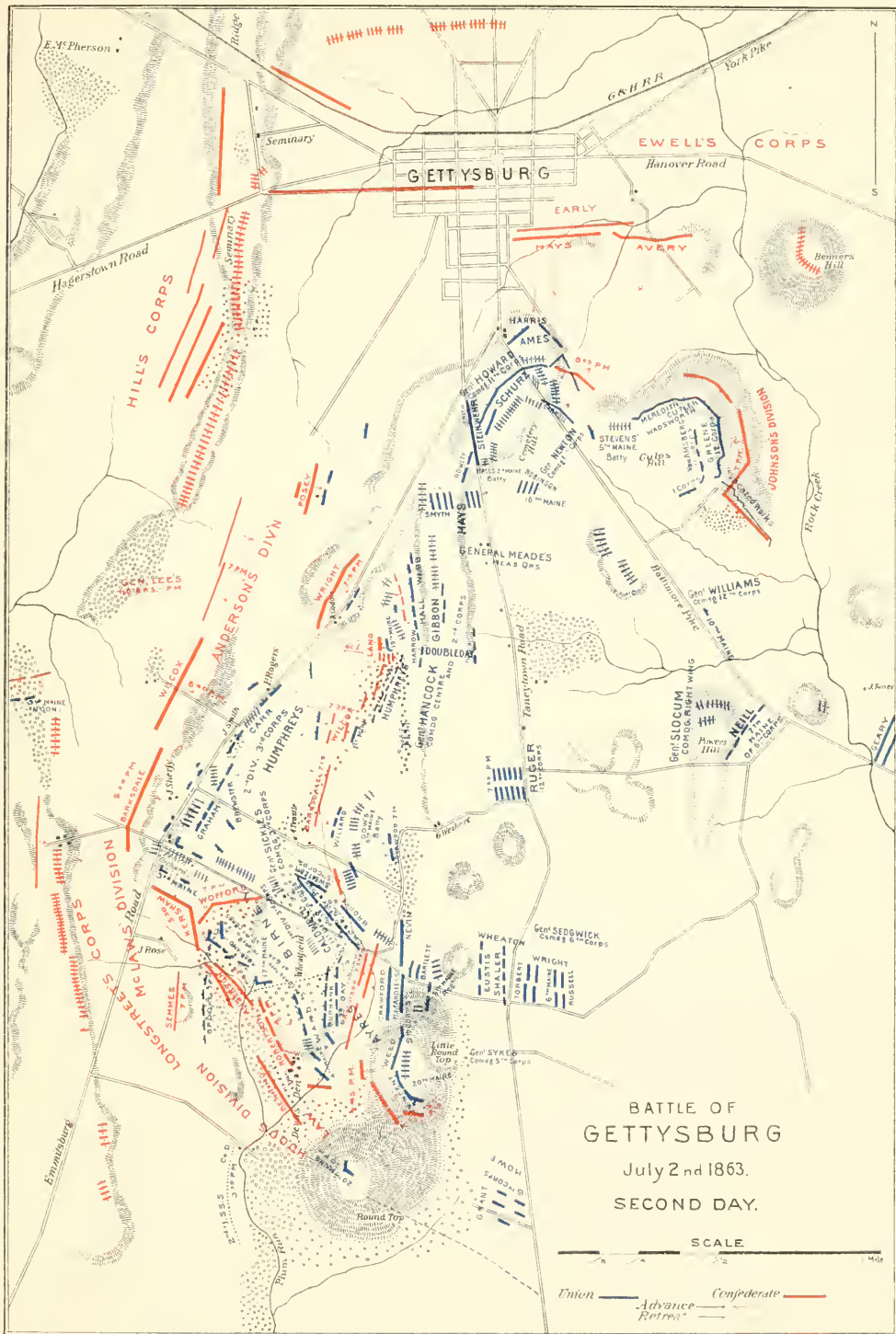
Slocum, decided not to make an attack. Cemetery Hill at the same time was well occupied by infantry and artillery.

On the second day *Lee* determined to assume the offensive and resolved to give battle, although it seems that when he opened his campaign he had declared that it should be an offensive-defensive one. Probably his success on the first day may have induced the belief that a change from his original plan was well warranted. He was also influenced by the belief that the attacking party has the moral advantage, and in the light of his experience at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville he thought he could succeed. *Longstreet* urged him to move around the Union left, and manœuvre Meade out of his position by threatening his communications with Washington; but he declined to accept the advice.

SECOND DAY.

On the morning of the second, *Lee's* general line was in concave order of battle, fronting the Union army, parallel to Cemetery Hill, and about a mile distant, with his left thrown to the east and through the town to a point opposite Culp's Hill. *Longstreet* was on his right, occupying Seminary Ridge, and about a mile distant from Cemetery Hill, with *Hill* in the centre and *Evell* on the left.

The Union position was in the following order, beginning on the right: Slocum on Culp's Hill; Howard on Cemetery Hill; Newton, who succeeded Doubleday, commanding the First Corps; Hancock; and Sickles; the latter occupying the low ground between Hancock on his right and Little Round Top on his left. The Twelfth Corps had come upon the ground after the fighting of the first day. The Second Corps arrived on the morning of the second day. Grahani's and Ward's brigades of the First Division of the Third Corps came upon the ground about seven o'clock on the night of the first day, followed by two brigades of the Second Division late in the night. One brigade from each division, left at Emmitsburg with artillery to guard the mountain pass, came up to Gettysburg in the forenoon of the second. The Fifth and and Sixth corps, by a hard night's march, arrived upon the





ground the second day. The morning of the second day was occupied by Meade in strengthening his position and watching for *Lee's* attack. He believed that *Lee* would attack him on the right of our line, and prepared to move against *Lee* from that point. He finally decided to remain on the defensive.

Lee having perfected his plans, directed *Longstreet*, with his two divisions, then upon the field, consisting of more than 15,000 men, to attack a salient thrown out by Sickles from the general line on our left at the Emmitsburg Road. Neither army then occupied Round Top and *Longstreet* endeavored to capture it by extending his right in that direction. Sickles' thin line, of less than 10,000 men, resisted *Longstreet* for three hours along the front of the Third Corps position; the main fighting of the First Division being from 4:15 to 6:30 P. M., and of the Second Division from 6 to 8 P. M. Towards the last of it, on both fronts, other troops came to the assistance of the Third Corps. A portion of the Fifth Corps, thrown into the support of Sickles, after a desperate struggle, secured Round Top; and though *Longstreet* forced Sickles back from his salient reinforced by troops from the Second, Fifth, Sixth, and Twelfth corps, he secured only a small benefit commensurate with his loss after a long and bloody engagement lasting from 4 o'clock P. M. until it was dark and late in the night.

The centre of the Union line was occupied by the Second Corps, under Hancock, who assumed command of the left soon after Sickles was wounded. The Nineteenth Maine Regiment, under Colonel Heath, assisted in repulsing the attack of *Hill* at the close of the day, and made a charge driving the enemy beyond the Emmitsburg Road, recapturing the guns of one of our batteries which had been abandoned. The casualties of the regiment in killed and wounded exceed those of any other Maine regiment on this field.

In the Third Corps position between Round Top and the Peach Orchard on the Emmitsburg Road, the Fourth Maine Regiment, Col. Elijah Walker, was in the Devil's Den; the Seventeenth, Lieut.-Col. Charles B. Merrill, was in the Wheat-field; and the Third Maine, Col. Moses B. Lakeman, was in the angle of the salient at the Peach Orchard.

The Fourth Maine, with great sacrifice, successfully repelled a determined attempt of *Law* to gain the rear of Birney, and by counter charges was largely instrumental in holding back the overwhelming forces brought against Devil's Den until our lines were established farther back. The Seventeenth Maine, substantially alone, held the Wheatfield against successive onslaughts of thrice its numbers of the veterans of *Longstreet* until it was relieved by Hancock's troops, after more than two hours of fighting, in which it sustained a loss of one-third of its strength in killed and wounded. The Third Maine with two other regiments in the Peach Orchard defeated the fierce attacks of *Kershaw's* South Carolinians upon the south front of that position, and held the ground until the enemy gained the rear of the Orchard, nearly surrounding the small remnant of the command.

When *Longstreet*, late in the day, was forcing the Union troops back upon our main line with the help of *Hill*, who aided to dislodge the Second Division of the Third Corps from the Emmitsburg Road, the reserve artillery under Major McGilvery assisted in repelling the enemy's final attack. The Sixth Battery, under Lieut. E. B. Dow, took part in the stand then made and enabled our infantry to re-form.

On the extreme left of the Union line was the Twentieth Maine Regiment, under Col. Joshua L. Chamberlain. His regiment was on the left of the Fifth Corps troops that took possession of Little Round Top and prevented the enemy, after desperate fighting, from turning our left. After expending all his ammunition, Colonel Chamberlain, by a timely charge, drove his opponents down the west side of the hill and captured many prisoners. After dark the regiment seized and held Big Round Top.

The Seventh Maine Regiment, Lieut.-Col. Selden Connor, took position on high ground east of Rock Creek, the extreme right of the Union infantry line, where it protected our flank, but was not severely engaged after having driven the enemy's skirmishers out along its front.

Capt. Jacob McClure, Co. D, 2d U. S. Sharpshooters, was out on the skirmish line in front of the First Division of the

Third Corps, between Round Top and the Emmitsburg Road, and was under constant fire from morning until the general advance of *Longstreet* in the afternoon. When the company fell back, some of the men remained in line of battle and filled vacant places in the thin line of the division. Others came under the command of Colonel Chamberlain on Little Round Top and assisted his company under Captain Morrill, who had command of a skirmish line on the left, where both delivered a flank fire upon the enemy at a critical moment.

On the right of the Union army *Ewell* gained after dark a foothold on Culp's Hill, where a portion of the Twelfth Corps had vacated its ground when ordered near night to other parts of the Union army.

During the movement against Culp's Hill, *Early's* division was directed to carry Cemetery Hill by a charge, preceded by an artillery fire from Benner's Hill from four Confederate batteries. These batteries, however, were silenced by our batteries on Cemetery Hill and Stevens' Fifth Maine Battery in position between Cemetery and Culp's Hill. Then *Early's* infantry moved out, but were handsomely repulsed, suffering severe loss, especially from the enfilading fire on their left flank by the Fifth Maine Battery.

THIRD DAY.

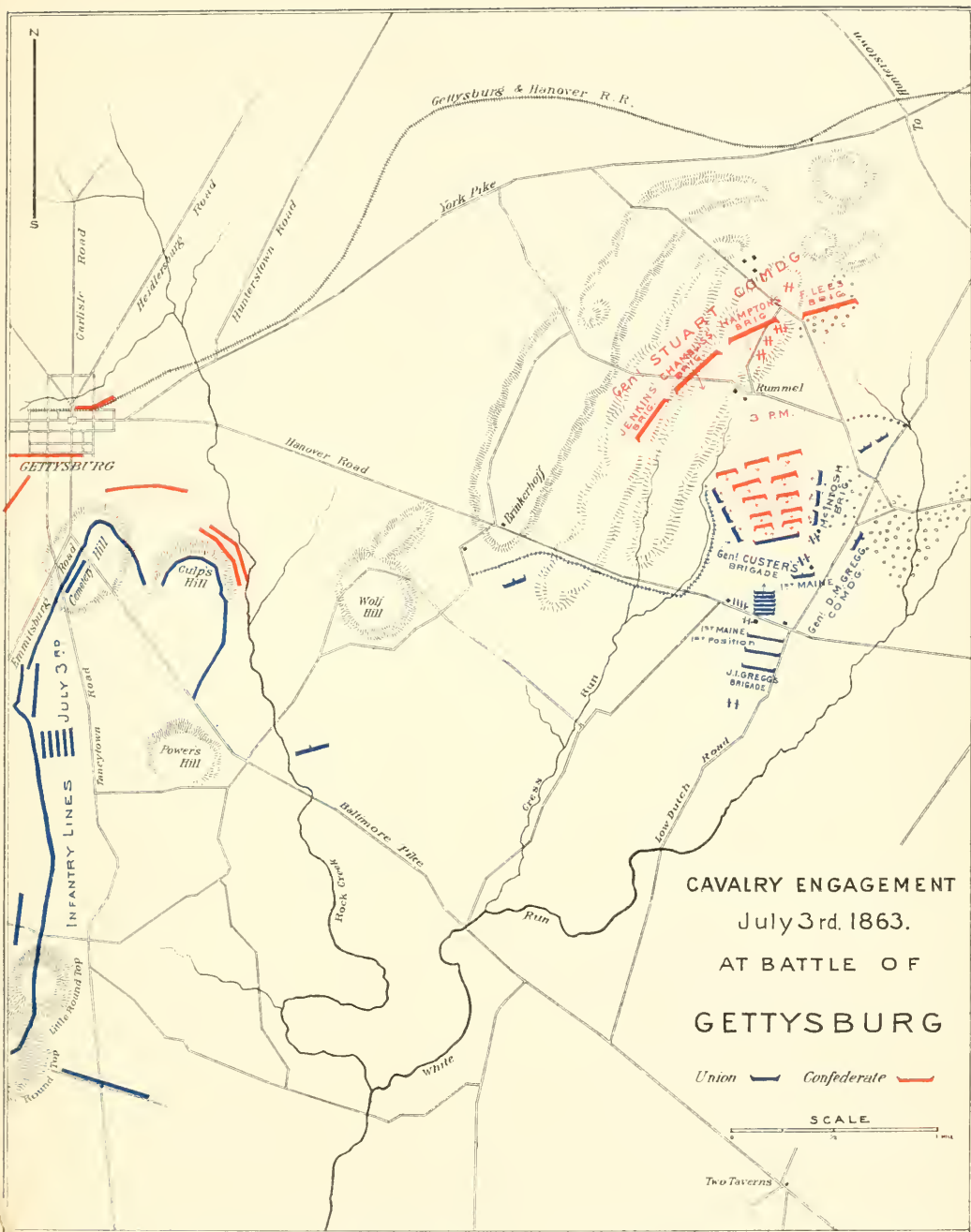
At the close of the second day, *Lee* believed that he had effected a lodgment in both flanks of the Union army. Meade called a council of his corps commanders and decided to remain and hold his position, and at daylight attacked *Ewell* in force and compelled him to give up the ground that he had occupied the night before that had been left vacant by a portion of the Twelfth Corps. Then *Lee* determined to attack the centre of the Union line held by the Second Corps. He accordingly ordered *Longstreet*, who was opposed to the movement, to make this assault which is generally called "Pickett's Charge." *Lee* massed nearly one hundred and fifty guns of his artillery along Seminary Ridge and the Emmitsburg Road and opened fire against the Union line. Barely eighty guns from our side

could be put in position to reply, and a tremendous artillery duel followed that lasted for two hours. Then *Pickett*, *Pettigrew*, and *Trimble*, under order of General *Longstreet*, with a column of about fifteen thousand men, made a charge into the centre of the Union line; but the charge failed, although some of *Pickett's* men broke through a portion of Hancock's first line, where they were met, in front and flank, by other forces of the Second Corps, including the Nineteenth Maine Regiment, and some of the First Corps, which rolled them back with great losses in killed, wounded, and prisoners. This ended the fighting along the infantry line of the Union army. The farthest point reached by the Confederates in this charge is marked by the "High-Water Mark" monument.

After the repulse of *Pickett* Kilpatrick made a charge from the extreme Union left without accomplishing much success. This was succeeded by an infantry reconnaissance composed of portions of the Fifth and Sixth corps—in the latter a part of the Fifth Maine Regiment participated—in the direction of the Peach Orchard, which resulted in the retirement of the enemy from nearly the entire front of the left of the Union lines to and beyond the Emmitsburg Road, the capture of a batch of prisoners, and the re-capture of a piece of artillery from the enemy. This successful and promising movement, however, was not followed up. There was a sharp and hard cavalry battle between Gregg, in conjunction with Custer, and *Stuart*, when the latter endeavored with his cavalry to pass around the Union right flank on the third day. Charges and counter charges were made there, and the Confederates, being defeated, withdrew from the field.

Lee spent all of the fourth day and until daylight on the fifth preparing for retreat, but in the meantime intrenching for any attack that might be made. But Meade did not attack; nor would he adventure anything. He permitted *Lee* to fall back to the Potomac without following up the advantage that he had gained. *Lee* crossed the Potomac at Williamsport and was followed some days after by Meade.

Of the forces actually engaged, the Union loss in the battle of Gettysburg was twenty-three thousand out of seventy-eight



thousand; the Confederate was twenty-three thousand out of seventy thousand,—about one-third of the entire number engaged.

The Maine troops engaged at Gettysburg, arranged in chronological order, were as follows :—

Second Maine Battery, Capt. James A. Hall.
Sixteenth Maine Regiment, Col. Charles W. Tilden.
Fifth Maine Battery, Capt. Greenlief T. Stevens.
Third Maine Regiment, Col. Moses B. Lakeman.
Fourth Maine Regiment, Col. Elijah Walker.
Seventeenth Maine Regiment, Lieut.-Col. Charles B. Merrill.
Twentieth Maine Regiment, Col. Joshua L. Chamberlain.
Nineteenth Maine Regiment, Col. Francis E. Heath.
Sixth Maine Battery, Lieut. Edwin B. Dow.
Co. D, 2d U. S. Sharpshooters, Capt. Jacob McClure.
Fifth Maine Regiment, Col. Clark S. Edwards.
Sixth Maine Regiment, Col. Hiram Burnham.
Seventh Maine Regiment, Lieut.-Col. Selden Connor.
First Maine Cavalry, Col. Charles H. Smith.
Tenth Maine Battalion, Capt. John D. Beardsley.

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